

BY NOW THE KING WAS A stricken man, exhausted by the strain of it all. His illness came upon him in the year 1405, the crisis of his fortunes and of the reign, with the Northumberland-Scrope treason. The credulous people said that Henry had been stricken on the very day of the Archbishop's beheading—it certainly was about that time—and that of course the King suffered for his execution of a consecrated person. This was the Middle Ages, and, since Henry was not exempt from the beliefs of his time, he probably suffered a further injection of guilt at his execution of a holy man, a consecrated person, if politically a goose. The people said that henceforward the King suffered from leprosy. Henry certainly seems to have had a stroke this year, and a succession of minor strokes later. The 'leprosy' was probably a kind of nervous eczema from the overstrain he had endured.

And, indeed, what wonder? It seems hard to understand why anybody would go in for kingship; but of course, apart from ambition, he was caught in a cleft stick by his birth and position. It had been a question of survival for him: he could not have survived under Richard as king. He must have had some afterthoughts when he sat in Richard's place; he had reason enough for repentance. Even the ordinary strain of medieval government would have been enough, but with the unceasing burdens, the continuing crises of the years 1401-7—it was more than the strongest and most willing man could bear. 'When the Duke of Lancaster seized the Crown he can have had little notion of the financial burden which was to weigh upon him for the rest of his life. . . . In the Hilary Parliament of 1404 the Chancellor, in enumerating the emergencies to be met, included Calais, the Isle of Wight, Guienne, Ireland and Scotland, the expenses of the Percy rebellion, and the Welsh revolt. In the October Parliament of the same year, when a grant of two fifteenths and two tenths was made, the wording ran: "considering the East March and the West March of Scotland, the rebellion in Wales, the alliance of the Welsh, Scotland, France and Brittany, the safeguarding of the sea, the March of Calais, Ireland, the recovery of Guienne, and the defence of the country". In the worst years, 1401-7, there was seldom

Henry IV

PART II

In the later years of Henry IV's
reign, when the King was an
ailing man, the young Prince
Henry favoured militant policies
and became, in a sense,
Leader of the Opposition to his
father.

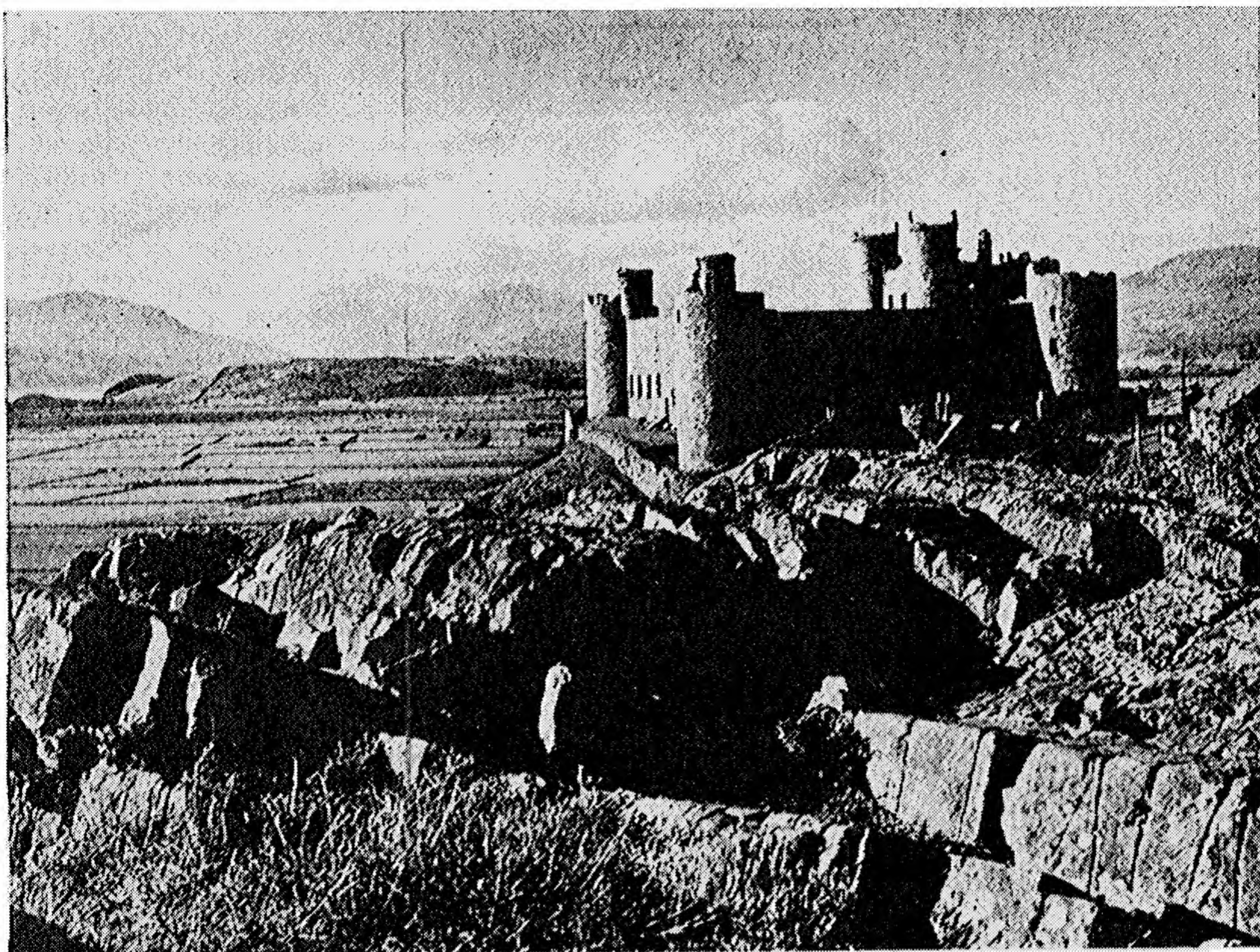
By A. L. ROWSE

less than four or five extraordinary demands upon the revenue, mostly concurrent.¹

Henry had emerged—but he could never have emerged without the constant support of Parliament. Unlike Richard, he ruled along with Parliament, in alliance with Parliament, careful to keep in step with both Lords and Commons. 'Throughout the fifteenth century the Commons took the greatest interest in public finance'—particularly the knights of the shire, who took the lead. Fundamentally Henry may be described—though without anachronistic overtones—as a constitutional monarch, as Richard had not been nor wished to be.

But, then, Henry was all the more anxious to make a good king, to exercise, conscientiously and responsibly, all the powers of the English monarchy for the good of the nation and the

¹E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (Oxford History of England).



From: 'The Civilizations of Europe', by Michael Grant; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965

Harlech Castle, Merioneth, a stronghold of Glendower's, which surrendered to the royal forces in 1409

Church, at home and abroad. Abroad, the most distracting issue was the Great Schism in the Church, which provides the background to these reigns: there were two Popes, one at Rome, the other at Avignon, with their rival claims, courts, paraphernalia, with their conflicting demands for obedience, for some seventy years. Imagine the scandal to the faithful, the diminution of authority, the loss of respect: how could the seamless vesture of the Lord support two heads? No wonder the growth of Lollardy in England gave the authorities such a headache: it was the main internal problem of the Church in these years. No wonder the Hussite movement in Bohemia reached such proportions—and there were fruitful contacts between the Lollards and the Hussites. The movement of criticism within the Church, the movements of protest against the Church—these were a continuing legacy

and offered premonitory symptoms of the Reformation.

Of course the Great Schism, which had originated in national feeling—French against Italian—was fed by national jealousies. 'The French government, true to its traditional policy of a French papacy, gave its support to Clement [the Avignonese Pope] against his Italian rival. That was sufficient to secure Urban's recognition [the Roman Pope] in England and Flanders; while Scotland and the Spanish kingdoms followed the lead of their French ally. For a full generation Western Christendom was divided into two camps in accordance with the needs of national policy. When at last the situation became intolerable, the settlement was dictated rather by reasons of international diplomacy than from any motives of religious expediency.'² Of course. The most recent his-

²C. L. Kingsford, *Henry V.*



From: 'Sculpture in Britain in the Middle Ages'; Penguin, 1955

WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM, *Bishop of Winchester*, 1367-1404, from an effigy in Winchester Cathedral

torian of Henry's reign, however, tells us that he made 'genuine efforts to restore unity in the Church and to achieve some measure of reform by a general council'.³ It was at least in part due to Henry's diplomacy that a general assembly met at Pisa in 1409—it all cost money and effort, successive missions and much ecclesiastical palaver.

At home Henry, who was pious and conventional, had Archbishop Arundel always at his side, Henry's staunchest support all the way along. The Church was determined to crush the Lollards, and in 1406 the statute *De heretico comburendo* was passed, with its evil legacy in burnings and persecutions, especially under the nefarious reign of Mary Tudor, when something short of three hundred persons were burned for their religion in three years. At one of the burnings in 1410 Prince Henry was

³Jacob, *op. cit.*

present. The victim was a poor tailor, John Badby, who did not believe that in the Mass bread and wine were transmuted into flesh and blood. For this piece of rational common sense he was, very properly—according to people's lights—to be burned. When the fire was already lit the Prince, thinking that Badby had made a sign of recantation, ordered the faggots to be taken away. The heretic lay on the ground; the Prince went to him and offered pardon and a livelihood if only he would recant. But the miserable tailor had no intention of denying the evidence of his senses to please authority—so the fire was relit and back to the flames he went.

Archbishop Arundel was determined to extirpate the influence at Oxford of its most brilliant and original teacher in the previous generation, the last in the line of Oxford thinkers who had constituted its glory for more than a century and made it one of the great universities of Europe. Arundel forced a visitation upon the university, in spite of its papal exemption. Leading followers of Wyclif were made to conform or at least to shut up; one of them, Peter Payne, had got away to become the official responsible for foreign affairs in the revolutionary Czech state. Oxford, robbed of its brightest spirits, settled down into second-rate conformity, and lost the immense ascendancy it had enjoyed over Cambridge, which became notably more favoured by the patronage of the Lancastrian house for its orthodoxy.

Nevertheless, there was a strong spirit of anti-clericalism abroad in the country and expressed in the Commons. Since the burden of taxation was so heavy, what about the greatest immunity of all, the Church? True, the secular clergy were taxed through the grants made in their Convocations; but what about the immense riches of the episcopal sees, that of Winchester, for example, which made Bishop Beaufort in time the financial support of the Lancastrian house, the chief creditor of the Crown? What of those religious houses that made no contribution to clerical taxation at all? Once and again motions were made in the Commons to expropriate the superfluous wealth of the Church for the benefit of the Crown and the relief of taxation. Archbishop Arundel was not standing for this, and Henry IV stood firmly

beside him. The alliance of Crown and Church, conservative in their view of society, was far too powerful for any combination of critics or radical pressures. But what would happen when one day the Crown deserted the alliance and went over to the other side?

With the King's illness and his liability to periodic incapacity—though to his dying day he would never give up or cease to exercise ultimate control—Prince Henry was more closely associated with government at the centre; we find him much more at Westminster, or in the neighbourhood of London, regularly attending Council. The main interest of the last years of the reign is to be found in the party conflict around the King, conflicts of views with regard to policy reflecting conflicts between interests and persons. In the ups and downs, the ebb and flow, of power, the King, in spite of his health, was no passive spectator. He held the ultimate authority and meant to exercise it.

Henry was to be found shoulder to shoulder with Archbishop Arundel, who represented the old baronial party, the constitutionalist tradition broad-based in the country. They were—after their experience of life—in favour of peace and therefore sought understanding with France, though this was difficult since France was distracted by dissensions between the Orleanist and Burgundian factions. Prince Henry was in favour of a militant, activist policy, taking advantage of these dissensions to make an alliance with Burgundy to push home against France—the policy he pursued when he became King. As yet he was not free to have his way, though he was a leading figure in Council. He was supported by his Beaufort uncles, who formed the nucleus of a princely 'Court-party', much more popular with and attended by the young than the King's Court itself. Since the Prince was a kind of Opposition leader—an anachronistic phrase, but a pattern subsequently found frequently enough between the monarch and his heir—Prince Thomas, the King's second son, sided with his father against his elder brother.

These differences and broils extended to domestic concerns and interests. Prince Henry managed once and again to foil Archbishop

Arundel's beneficent intentions with regard to Oxford—the Prince may have been a *com-mensalis* at Queen's during the year when Henry Beaufort was Chancellor of the university. Moreover, Prince Henry was a friend of Sir John Oldcastle's, now becoming the secular leader of the Lollard interest. In 1409 Oldcastle made an advantageous marriage with a Kentish heiress, the Lady Cobham, in right of whom he was sometimes named Lord Cobham and summoned as a baron to Parliament. This can hardly have given Archbishop Arundel unadulterated pleasure. In 1410 Prince Thomas married the widow of John Beaufort; but the financier Bishop Beaufort, very keen on the money, withheld some of the Beaufort property which Thomas thought should come to him with his bride. Prince Henry supported his uncle, the Bishop; Thomas allied himself with Archbishop Arundel.

Arundel was Henry's leading minister from 1407 to the end of 1409. But the rising tide of anti-clerical sentiment, which reached a new crest in 1410 with demands for expropriation of the Church's superfluous wealth, along with Prince Henry's hostility, forced the Archbishop out. His place as Chancellor was taken by Thomas Beaufort, who was suspected of favouring the anti-clerical party, as his father, Gaunt, had done before him. The government was really the Prince's, full of energy and zeal to govern. Parliamentary petitions were addressed to 'My lord the Prince and the Council'; the King remained in the background, sickening to his death.

Prince Henry was now free to pursue his policy of active interference in the dissensions in France. He had this to be said for him, that the French King was the traditional enemy. Prince Henry was the traditionalist, the fighting prince. He entered into negotiations for a marriage with the Duke of Burgundy's daughter. He sent a small expedition to assist Burgundy in his struggle with the Armagnacs, under the command of those faithful Lancastrian captains the Umfravilles and Sir John Oldcastle. Henry IV had wanted to marry his son to a daughter of the French king and pursue a policy of peace. How time brings about its revenges!—here was Henry back on Richard's path, obstructed by his son in turn.



From: 'Sculpture in Britain in the Middle Ages'

Stone statues from the screen in Canterbury Cathedral, dating from 1411-1430

The ironical twist of events back to Richard might have gone further, the resemblance in situation become closer, for in 1411 there was a definite demand, on the part of the Beauforts, that Henry should abdicate in favour of his son. The ground for the demand was Henry's ill-health. But the King recovered, and reacted vigorously by dismissing the Prince and his friends from the Council, and completely changing the government. All was done in proper form: the Prince and his lords were thanked for their great labours and diligence. Prince Henry replied on behalf of his government that they had laboured according to their

oath and to the best of their understanding. Public appearances were kept, though the King and his son held separate Courts and saw little of each other. There was no doubt that the Prince had been dismissed. The unsinkable Archbishop Arundel came back in 1412, with Prince Thomas to support him; the Beauforts were out. For what remained to him of life the government was the King's.

There followed a reversal of policy. The Armagnac⁴ party in France around the French

⁴The Orleanist party was led by Bernard, Count of Armagnac, after the murder of Louis of Orleans in 1407.

King offered to give up French claims to Aquitaine in return for an English alliance; the opportunity was taken and a treaty at once concluded. An expedition under Prince Thomas, now created Duke of Clarence and named Lieutenant of Aquitaine, crossed to Normandy to aid the Armagnacs. This faction, who had called the English in, now bought them off and allowed them, rather humiliatingly, to proceed to Aquitaine.

This fiasco redounded to Prince Henry's credit, who never had trusted the Armagnacs but remained solidly in favour of the Burgundian alliance. Nor did he allow his case to go by default: he sent messengers to leading personages throughout England stating his case and thus won many of them round to his point of view. When he came to London, it was observed that he had a greater following, and greater resort made to him, than the King had. The Prince was thus able to hold head against his opponents and refute their charges that he had diverted moneys intended for the defence of Calais to his own use. He demanded an audience of the King; at last his father received him and promised that the charges should be examined in open Parliament. In September the Prince appeared in London, again with a numerous retinue. He had no difficulty in producing proof that he was still owed a large sum of money for his outlay in both Wales and Calais instead of profiting from his services. But he did not shake the King's government.

This is the place to discuss the relations between Henry IV and his son, the traditions of their discord and of the wildness of the Prince's youth. The whole subject became overlaid with legend and myth—the more so because Henry V became a famous hero, something of a mythical figure—before ever Shakespeare arrived to stamp the legend indelibly upon our minds with the most wonderful of all his history-plays, the two parts of *Henry IV*.

It is necessary to get back behind the legend to the truth of history. What we can say is that good formal relations between the King and his son always subsisted: there was never a public breach; disagreement as to policy was conducted with dignity and decorum, even the Prince's dismissal was managed with formal courtesy. But there must have been feeling

underneath, especially with the Prince's appeal to public opinion and his demand for an audience with his father to justify himself. Nor is it unnatural to suppose, in the circumstances of the King's debility and his son's haste to govern—as the judicious biographer of Henry V does—'some natural jealousy between the reigning sovereign and his heir'.⁵ It is a familiar enough pattern.

As for the stories of Prince Henry's youth, the few touches that go back to the fourth Earl of Ormonde have a certain authenticity, for he was in a position to know. There is no reason to suppose that Prince Henry had a wildcap, scapegrace youth, though there is reason to believe that on his accession to the throne he became a changed man, underwent a kind of conversion in confronting the burden of his office. (It must have been this that drew President Kennedy, youngest of the Presidents, to the person of Henry and made *Henry V* his favourite play. At one of his last assemblies in the White House, he had an English actor recite Henry's speech before Agincourt with its theme of the burdens of kingly rule and the penalties a ruler has to bear.)

It seems to be true that from the time of his accession to the throne until his marriage to Catherine of France, Henry V maintained entire continence, a dedicated man. The implication is that earlier he had not—and that would be natural enough; he was a young soldier, full of vitality and energy, who passed much of his youth in camp with other fighting soldiers. It is true that Sir John Oldcastle was a companion in arms who rose through the Prince's favour. When Henry became King he dissociated himself from the knight, but that was because Oldcastle was a Lollard—a very different kettle of fish from Sir John Falstaff, who was anything but a pious Lollard. Shakespeare may have derived a hint from the historic Sir John Fastolf's retreat at Patay—for the rest, the East Anglian Fastolf was a good, hardy, veteran campaigner—but Shakespeare never needed more than a hint. And it is true that when Prince Henry resided at Coldharbour in East Cheap, in the City, he was just across the way from Oldcastle's house, Cobham's Inn,

⁵Kingsford, *op. cit.*



From: 'Sculpture in Britain in the Middle Ages'

Alabaster effigies of HENRY IV and his second wife, JOAN OF BRITTANY; Canterbury Cathedral, about 1410-1420

and neither of them very far from the Boar's Head—for what that portends. We know that East Cheap stood for good cheer from the contemporary poem 'London Lickpenny':

Then I hied me into East Cheap:
One cries, ‘Ribbs of beef and many a pie!’
Pewter pots they clattered on a heap;
There was harp, pipe, and minstrelsy:
‘Yea, by cock!’ ‘Nay, by cock!’ some began cry;
Some sang of Jenkin and Julian for their
meed [reward].
But, for lack of money, I might not speed.

The rumours of brawling in the City probably go back to the 'hurling in East Cheap' in 1410, in which Henry's brothers, Thomas and John, were concerned. No doubt they were all a high-spirited lot. After supper there seems to have been a brawl between the young Princes' followers and other young courtiers, so that the sedate mayor and sheriffs had to be called in to appease the disturbance. No doubt the young

men's doings would be reported to their father. There seems to be no foundation for the tradition of Henry V's chequered relations with good Chief Justice Gascoigne, though they must have known each other, and when he became king Henry treated him with favour. Perhaps there is a confused reminiscence here of Gascoigne's refusal to carry out Henry IV's order to sentence Archbishop Scrope to death.

There does seem reason to accept the story of the Prince's last sad interview with his father, when he came before him—remember, that he was out of the Council, kept out of office—clad in strange attire, his garments slit and sewn over with needles. This would have been intended to imply that his eyes were open to all that was going on and the needles would be emblematic of diligence in doing his duty, readiness to repair. More than a century later we have evidence of the use of such symbols in the entourage of Queen Elizabeth, appearing on a

dress of hers, notably the symbols of open eye and tongue. Something of the truth between King Henry and his son can be represented in the account that has come down in Capgrave. There seems little doubt that at the end the King repented his usurpation of Richard's throne; but he could make no remedy, 'for my children will not suffer the regality to go out of our lineage'.⁶ The French chronicler Monstrelet may not be exact but he has the essence of the situation when he makes the Prince say to his father, 'my lord, as you have kept and guarded it by the sword, so do I intend to guard it all my life'; to which the dying King replies: 'Do as it seemeth good to you; for myself I commit me to God, and pray that he will take me to his mercy.'

The excitements of these last political struggles wore down the King's remaining strength. He could hardly walk or ride; but as his life ebbed, he remembered his crusading days and his brief visit to Jerusalem, as a young prince of the house of Lancaster. He dreamed of leading a Crusade to deliver the Holy City

⁶Kingsford, introduction to *The First English Life of King Henry V.*

from the infidels. At times he seemed to recover, and then to suffer another seizure. His last seizure took him on March 20th, 1413, as he was praying at the shrine of Edward the Confessor, patron saint of the royal house and of England, in Westminster Abbey; he was carried into the abbot's lodgings, and there in the Jerusalem chamber he died—in Jerusalem at the last.

Shakespeare, with his understanding of the human condition, of the inextricable dilemmas in which historical circumstance of birth and time and place entwine the great, expresses what Henry must have felt contemplating the upshot of his life:

God knows, my son,
By what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways
I met this crown, and I myself know well
How troublesome it sat upon my head:
To thee it shall descend with better quiet,
Better opinion, better confirmation;
For all the soil of the achievement goes
With me into the earth.

(Concluded)

An extract from Bosworth Field to be published by Macmillan in October.



HENRY V, 1413-1422, by an unknown artist

By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery